(b) if so, how it is justifibale that the U.S. is interested to destroy Talibans in Afghanistan for which Government are supporting U.S. actions in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government is aware of the antecedents of the Taliban and the strong links that the Taliban has with Pakistan, including with its military forces.

(b) It is widely recognised by the international community that the Taliban harbours Osama Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda network and that they have turned Afghanistan into a centre of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. Even before the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11th September, the UN Security Council has adopted resolution calling on the Taliban to hand over the Osama Bin Laden and close down all terrorist training camps and bases.

Government has consistently advocated that terrorism is a global problem that requires a comprehensive international response targeted against terrorism and its sponsors everywhere in the world. It is also well established that the Taliban and the Al Qaeda network have links with terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir. Government's support to the ongoing military campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan is, therefore, in keeping with India's national interest.

Impact of American war on India and South Asian Region

1899. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken stock of the situation arising out of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, and its consequences for India and South Asian region;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction on the United States utilizing this attack to declare a unilateral war against "Global Terrorism" bye-passing the UN and other international forums to attack on Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government has been continuously monitoring and assessing the situation arising out of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11th September, 2001 and subsequent developments, including the ongoing military campaign against the Taliban and the Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan.

(b) Government believes that the destruction of the Taliban and Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan and the establishment of a moderate, broad-based and multi-ethnic government there, together with the increased international focus on combating terrorism, will have a salutary effect on the problem of terrorism in India.

(c) Government supports the ongoing military campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda network as an important step in the global war against terrorism and its sponsors everywhere in the world. The issue of international terrorism, including the Taliban's support to it, has been a subject of on going discussions and resolutions in the United National and its Security Council.

New Scheme for Passport seekers

†1900. DR. A. K. PATEL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any new scheme is under Government's consideration for benefit of the persons desirous of getting passports;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the parts of the country where Government propose to implement it?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. The Govt. has decided to decentralise the passport services and to bring these services closer to the people. Under this scheme, the passport applicants can deposit their filled passport application forms through the network of designated Speed Post Centres of the Deptt. of Posts and the SP/DM's office in each District. The forms will be scrutinzed and documents checked by

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.